

**The last time we used VistaPHw was...**

"A forum on agricultural burning several weeks ago, I looked up rates of hospitalization for asthma over the last 10 years for Whitman, Spokane County and Washington State."  
--**Whitman County**

"To find data on pregnancy rates for Walla Walla County for several different local agencies."  
--**Walla Walla County**

"A socioeconomic data request from Ocean Beach school district for an after school activities grant they are preparing..."  
--**Pacific County**

"...I compiled information about disease cases and rates for salmonella, botulism, E. coli and campylobacter for Whatcom County and Washington State."  
--**Whatcom County**

"Life expectancy for King County men and women."  
--**King County**

"Rates of diabetes-related mortality among African-Americans, Native Americans, and Hispanics in Washington State."  
--**WA State DOH**

VistaPHw is used across the Washington State public health system as a standardized tool for community health assessment. Assessment – the work of collecting, analyzing, interpreting and sharing information about population health status – is one of the core functions of public health. Through assessment, public health officials and their partners identify their communities' important health issues in order to set local prevention priorities and guide policy decisions. To do this work, they need timely information that is specific to their communities, as well as technology and skills to analyze it.

For this purpose, Public Health – Seattle and King County (PHSKC) began developing VistaPHw in 1991. VistaPHw is a menu-driven software package that allows users with diverse computer skills to access and analyze population-based health data. By selecting various options, including type of health indicator, age group, race, gender, time period and geographic location, the user can easily create specific analyses of health indicators. A key feature is that VistaPHw allows the user to analyze health indicators within customized geographic areas based on groupings of census tracts, zip codes, or counties (turn page for description of VistaPHw functionality).

**Who uses VistaPHw?**

VistaPHw is used primarily by public health assessment staff and health officials in Washington's local health jurisdictions (LHJs) and State Department of Health (DOH). The software is also used by academic researchers and instructors, foundations, farmworker and tribal health clinics, and other public agencies. The major uses include responding to community requests for health data, supporting grant proposals, analyzing trends in key public health issues, and generating data for program planning and policy development.

**The VistaPHw Partnership**

In 1996, the Washington State DOH and 32 local health jurisdictions entered into a partnership with PHSKC to disseminate VistaPHw statewide and to provide training and assistance to LHJs in its use. Through the VistaPHw Partnership, LHJs and DOH continue to guide the development of VistaPHw, and collaborate in the formation of standards for assessment data and methods. VistaPHw is the longest standing information technology partnership in Washington's public health system, and represents an innovative, system-wide solution to public health's need for community assessment information.

## VistaPHw is Designed for Flexible Analyses

VistaPHw is both an intuitive, point-and-click interface *and* a collection of public health data sets. Data sets in VistaPHw include pregnancy, birth and abortion; death (including linked infant birth-death); hospitalizations; communicable diseases (including TB and STDs); cancer registry; marriage and divorce; census; and intercensal population estimates and projections.

The interface is downloaded from the web at [www.vistaphw.net](http://www.vistaphw.net). Calculations are done by programs stored on a webserver. Data files are accessed from webserver over the internet. VistaPHw output is sent to the user's desktop as an Excel spreadsheet for chart or table production.

## The VistaPHw User Interface

The screenshot shows the VistaPHw 2.0.8.5 interface. It includes a 'Data Website' dropdown, a 'Data Folder' dropdown (set to 'USA\WA'), and buttons for 'ASSESSMENT TOPICS', 'STREAMS', 'LAUNCH', and 'GEOGRAPHIC UNITS'. The 'ASSESSMENT TOPICS' section lists various diseases like 'Amoebiasis', 'Botulism', and 'E. Coli O157:H7'. The 'STATISTICS' section offers options for 'Rates', 'Trends', and 'Age Components'. The 'RACES' section lists demographic groups like 'Total', 'White', and 'Black'. The 'YEARS' section shows a list of years from 1980 to 2002. The 'WA COUNTIES' section lists Washington state counties. Callouts provide detailed instructions for each section.

Select National, State or Local Data.

Online help menus

Create and save a customized geographic area (community) by grouping counties, zip codes, or census tracts.

Select a single year, range of years, or combine years to get a rolling average.

Select an Assessment Topic such as "Communicable Diseases," then choose a disease such as "E. Coli or Campylobacteriosis."

Select demographics and choice of crude, age-adjusted or age-stratified rates. Trend tests are available for all rates and include significance levels and slopes. The user can also create demographic groupings (e.g. combine age groupings).

## For More Information

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